

Mobile & Ohio Railroad Office Building
409 N. Royal Street
Mobile
Mobile County
Alabama

HABS No. ALA-794

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49-MOBI,
126-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. ALA-794

MOBILE & OHIO RAILROAD OFFICE BUILDING

Location: 409 N. Royal Street, Mobile, Mobile County, Alabama.
Geographic Location Code: 01-2100-097.

Present Use: Demolished for Water Street Urban Renewal Project
in the late 1960's.

Statement of This structure is a fine example of the office buildings
Significance: constructed in Mobile in the mid-nineteenth century. The
scored stucco exterior makes this one of particular interest.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1860 (according to the files of the Interstate Commerce Commission, Division of Valuation, January 20, 1916, pages 76-78).
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners: The lot upon which this building stands is number fourteen (square 272) of the Orange Grove Tract. Most of the existing building was constructed in 1860, presumably for James H. Daughdrill and George W. Bond, who each owned a half interest in the property. Purchased in 1873 by the Mobile & Ohio Railroad Company, the building was altered and enlarged to accomodate the offices of the Company. The following chain of title was extracted from the Deed Books of the Probate Court Record Division, Mobile County:

1859 Deed December 15, 1859 in Book 24 page 256

James H. Daughdrill

to

George W. Bond

"...in consideration of the sum of \$9,500 do grant... also all the undivided one-half interest...lot number fourteen...of the Orange Grove Tract...front on west side of Royal Street...of...sixty feet...depth...of ...one hundred sixty-nine feet...subject to an agreement...in reference to an alley..."

1873 Deed January 30, 1873 in Book 31 page 189
George W. Bond
to
John Reid, Jr.
(one-half interest in property)

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1873 Deed February 11, 1873 in Book 31 page 191
James H. Daughdrill
to
John Reid, Jr.
(one-half interest in property)

1874 Deed February 4, 1874 in Book 32 page 516
John Reid, Jr.
to
Mobile & Ohio Railroad Company
"Know all men...that...Daughdrill and...his wife...
in consideration of four thousand dollars...convey
to J. Reid, Jr., one undivided half of the lot of
ground in the northern part of the city...and whereaa
the said conveyances above referred to...(were)...
obtained by me (Reid), and the purchase of said lot
was made by (me) as an agent and trustee for the...
Mobile & Ohio Railroad Co. to be used as a part of
the ground for the location of the office of said
Company for its business in the city of Mobile...the
said lot above referred to...now in the possession of
said...Company..."

The Railroad, later named the Gulf, Mobile and Ohio
Railroad Company, owned and used the building until
it was demolished.

4. Builder of contractor: Unknown
5. Original plan and construction: There are notes concerning the original plan and construction in the ICC files mentioned above.
6. Alterations and additions: As indicated in the Valuation report of the ICC and floor plans of the building drawn by Charles Hayes, architect, and dated June 17, 1907 (see HABS sheet), most of the three-story brick building existed when it was purchased by the Railroad in 1873. At this time, the existing building was remodeled and extended 25' to the rear (west). It seems likely that the brick was covered with scored stucco during a later renovation, in 1907, and that the cast-iron elements, including the balcony, were also added. It was not until this date, then, that the structure assumed its

present appearance and character. Minor improvements on the interior were also made at this time, when some of the partitions were changed, windows replaced and toilets added. At some point, the original paired gable roofs were covered by a tin deck. ALA
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B. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views: There are four photographs (c. 1916) of the building included in the ICC Valuation report.

2. Bibliography

- a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Mobile Deed Books, Probate Court Record Division,
Mobile County

Interstate Commerce Commission Valuation, Report
of January 20, 1916, pages 76-78. (Copy in
General Office of Gulf, Mobile & Ohio Railroad.)

Floor plan drawings of Charles Hayes, Architect,
June 17, 1907. (See HABS sheet; original in
General Office of Gulf, Mobile & Ohio Railroad.)

- b. Secondary and published sources:

Bird's Eye View of the City of Mobile, Alabama, 1873,
Cincinnati, Ehrgotte T. Krebs, 1873.

Southern and Southwestern Surveying and Publishing
Company, City Atlas of Mobile, Alabama, from
actual Surveys and Records, Baltimore, G.M.
Hopkins, 1878.

Prepared by Linda Carroll
Student Historian
August 29, 1966
and
Charles A. Herrington
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
July 14, 1972

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

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A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: In its structural elements and design, this building is typical of mid-nineteenth-century office buildings. Covered with scored stucco (probably added in 1907) in imitation of the exaggerated rustication patterns initiated by Mannerist architects in Italy, the final character assumed by the structure is vaguely that of an Italian palace of the late sixteenth century.
2. Condition of fabric: Due to heavy loads on the floors and general neglect, the building had deteriorated badly before demolition in the late 1960's.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: This is a three-story rectangular building measuring 54'-8" (eight bay front) x 84'-6" deep x 43'-0" high from the first floor to the top of the parapet. There is no way to verify that the building was extended by 25'-0" (ICC report) in 1873, although the rear rooms including the vaults, scale that amount on the Hayes 1907 drawings.
2. Foundations: Although not accessible to observation, the ICC report includes a sketch indicating that the first floor is 18" above grade and that the building, except the rear 25', rests on brick piles that are 17" thick above ground level and spread from 22" to 4'-0" below ground level to a depth of 3'-0". The rear wall and the rear 25'-0" of the side walls and center bearing wall rest on beds of timber 12" thick x 5'-0" wide.
3. Wall construction, finish: The brick masonry walls are 17" thick on the first floor and 13" thick above. Whether there was an original stucco finish is conjectural. A fragment of the Hayes drawings of 1907 shows a large-scale elevation of the stucco wall, dimensioning the ashlar courses and the depth of the "V"-shaped grooves, thus indicating that the present stucco probably dates from that period.
4. Structural system, framing: Although the framing is not visible, the ICC report states that all floors appear to have 2" x 14" joists 18" on center with 13/16" tongue-and-groove flooring. It also contains a sketch showing the roof framing as two simple trusses, spanning from exterior walls to the center bearing wall, with 2" x 8" joists

spaced 2'-0" on center and 2" x 6" collars, or rafter ties, spaced 2'-0" on center. From the bottom of the ceiling joist to the top ridge (at the center line) is 6'-0". The center bearing wall was built up at a later date to support the center of the tin deck carried on 3" x 7" rafters spaced 17" on center, spanning from the center wall to each ridge line.

5. Porches, stoops: The entrance stoop is off-center in the fourth bay from the south wall, recessed within the arched opening. The steps have cast-iron treads, 14" wide and the floor surface is cement tile. The porch is one of the eight bays formed by the end walls, a center pier, and six cast-iron fluted columns 9'-5" high, set in antis, and supporting an arcade. A balcony extended across the east front below the windows of the second story. There were thirteen cast-iron arms built into the brick wall to support the balcony, which extended 5'-0" over the sidewalk, and it had an ornamental cast-iron railing 34" high.
6. Chimneys: On both the north and south walls, there are three stuccoed brick chimneys with "T"-shaped terra cotta chimney pots.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The entrance door is wooden with four panels, vertical rectangles over squares. The mouldings of the panelling have concave circular sections inserted at the corners and the tops of the vertical panels are arched.
 - b. Windows and shutters: The Hayes drawings indicate that the original windows were replaced with the existing double-hung wooden sash with two-over-two lights on the first floor and four-over-four lights on the other floors. First-floor sills are cast-iron and the windows have iron guards. Window sills on the upper floors are plastered brick. The ICC report states that all first and second-floor windows had inside folding shutters, but none are in place today.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The original paired gables were covered with slate. The outer slopes, left exposed with the addition of the tin deck, are presently covered with asbestos shingles.

b. Cornice, eaves: The walls are crowned by an entablature with a cornice supported on simple, shallow brackets (creating a panelled frieze), above which is a smooth low parapet with a simple cap moulding.

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c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: None

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The ICC report states that the Hayes drawings made minor changes in partitions, but it is not possible to determine these changes. On the first floor, a deep recessed entry leads to the hall, to the left of which is a small office, a stairwell at right angles to the hall, and a transverse hallway leading to a toilet room under the stairs and to the exterior (south). At the end of the hall is a doorway leading to a large room, beyond which on the southwest corner is a small room and a brick vault. The hall is separated from rooms flanking it on the right (north) by a bearing wall. The rooms in line on the right are a small front room, a large central room, and then a small corner room flanked also by a brick vault. Thus, the two vaults are situated back-to-back in the center of the building on the rear wall. If the ICC report is correct in stating that the building was extended 25'-0", it appears that the addition consisted of the two corner rooms and the two vaults. Wooden posts and an 8" x 8" girder have been inserted in the front and center rooms on the north. The second floor is similar to the first, except that a second transverse hall intervenes between the middle room on the south and the small southeast corner room. Similar vaults are also on the second floor. The central hall from the east balcony runs through to the walls of the vault. On the third floor, the stairhall is the width of the double flight and is flanked by a small room in the southeast corner matching the other floors. On the opposite side of the hall, there are two interconnecting rooms which are not the same size of any rooms below. Three interconnecting rooms on the north wall also do not line up with rooms below.
2. Stairways: There is a double-flight wooden stairway immediately behind the southeast corner room. It is badly maintained, but the ICC report states that the rail and newels are black walnut, with turned balusters.
3. Flooring: Floors are random-width tongue-and-groove boards.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All existing walls and ceilings are now beaded tongue-and-groove boards. Evidence on exposed

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studs bears out the statement of the ICC report that all walls had 3'-0" high wainscoting with painted plaster above, and beaded ceilings on the second and third floors only.

5. Doorways and doors: Some interior doorways are round-headed; some have transoms. ,What few doors remain are panelled, some with glass lights in the upper panels. The reveals of the jambs are panelled.
6. Special decorative features, trim: None is visible.
7. Notable hardware: On the doorway at the end of the hall on the first floor there are pairs of unusually large double hinges, 12" long excluding decorative finials. It is conjectured that these hinges were originally vault hinges, since the light glazed double doors would not require them.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: Each room on each floor is provided a fireplace with cast-iron grates and wooden mantelpieces, glazed tile hearths and faces. The ICC report states that one of these was oak with a mirror.
 - b. Lighting: The ICC report states that the building was originally piped for gas and that the fixtures have been removed.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building is on the west side of Royal Street between Lipscomb and Beauregard Streets facing east.
2. Landscaping: At the present time, there is no landscaping, and only fragments of a circular brick walk are to be found in the rear. Inspection of old photographs and the information in the ICC report indicate that at that time (1916), there was 174 feet of brick fence in a perforated design, and 830 linear feet of brick walks on the property. It also lists 3,000 square yards of sodding, four magnolia trees, forty banana trees, five fig trees and forty shrubs and rose bushes. This suggests quite an elaborate landscaping in formal design, as evidenced by the snapshots.
3. Outbuildings: Although none remain, there were originally several large warehouses located behind (west) the building. These are the subject of two of the photographs in the ICC report. With large brick facades, they appear to be open

on the long sides with wooden framing exposed.

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Prepared by Woodrow W. Wilkins
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National Park Service
July 20, 1966
and
Charles A. Herrington
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
July 18, 1972

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared as a cooperative project during the summer of 1966 between the Historic American Buildings Survey and various agencies, organizations, and individuals of the City of Mobile. The Historic American Buildings Survey supplied the project supervisor, Woodrow W. Wilkins, and three draughtsmen, Carl J. Rosenberg (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Michael R. Foil (Auburn University), and Lowell K. West (University of Kentucky). One draughtsman, Elbert L. Coleman (Alabama A & M), was provided by the Mobile Housing Board, which agency administers urban renewal. The services of an additional draughtsman, James Eley, specifically designated as an architectural student from Auburn University, were made possible by contributions from numerous local architects and businessmen. The Historic Mobile Preservation Society, in agreement with the History Department of Springhill College, provided a student historian, Linda Carroll. Office space was supplied by the City of Mobile through the City Planning Commission. Roy Thigpen, a local photographer, was contracted to supply the photographs. All local arrangements were made by the Mobile Historic Development Commission, Mrs. Nancy N. Holmes, President. The project was edited during the summer of 1972 by Charles A. Herrington, Architectural Historian, in a cooperative effort between the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Mobile Historic Development Commission.

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REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

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